

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: APRIL 1, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS	TESSIER	REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
	BELDEN	KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
	KENNY	PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
	SHEEHAN	LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
	MERLINO	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
	SIMMES	HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
	STRAINER	JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
		JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
		KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
		SUPERVISOR CHAMPAGNE
		SUPERVISOR GOODSPEED
		SUPERVISOR PITKIN
		SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
		RON OFNER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ADIRONDACK REGIONAL TOURISM COUNCIL
		TOM CONNORS, OWNER OF AD WORKSHOP, LAKE PLACID
		ALICE GREYER, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM, CITY OF GLENS FALLS
		LUISA CRAIG-SHERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS
		TOM RANDALL, <i>THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL</i>
		FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
		LARRY BENNETT, OWNER OF BENNETT'S RIDING STABLE
		JASON SHERRY, ADIRONDACK PROMOTIONS
		KEVIN TOUHY, THE INN AT ERLOWEST
		BRIAN COLE, CLARION INN & SUITES
		CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 9:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Director of the Tourism Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson requested to amend the 2009 County budget to decrease estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$44,264 to reflect the reduction in matching funds received from New York State.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to amend the 2009 County budget, as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson provided a copy of the Tourism Department 2008 Year in Review Binder to the Committee members; *a copy of the binder is on file with the minutes.* She added that the binder was completed annually and covered what had happened in the previous year. She said that the binder included conversion researches, media schedules, press releases, copies of advertisements, group tours, matching funds and budget history.

Ms. Johnson stated that she had requested that Ron Ofner, Executive Director of the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council and Tom Connors, Owner of the Ad Workshop in Lake Placid, New York, give a presentation on advertising materials for the Adirondacks.

Mr. Ofner said that the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council promoted tourism with the pooled resources of the eight counties in the Adirondacks: Warren; Hamilton; Essex; Clinton; Franklin; St. Lawrence; Lewis; and Herkimer. He advised that the total budget for 2009 was approximately \$800,000, which was a decrease of approximately 20% from 2008. He added that the majority of the budget was expended on advertising and promotional efforts and that one-third of the budget was spent on television advertisement.

Mr. Ofner displayed the godacks.com website to the Committee members and pointed out that there were ten different banner advertisements on the website. He explained that the summer campaign would soon commence and that a lot of the resources were derived from this campaign. He said that last year they had generated an increase of 43,000 people from the television campaign. He apprised the Committee that they also used the Video On Demand (VOD) cable television service, which allowed viewers to choose an option that displayed an informational video. He added that the VOD had generated 28,000 downloads. He added that in excess of 70,000 people had been exposed to the Adirondacks due to the television campaign. Mr. Connors advised that the television commercial was in full high definition and he played the 30 second commercial for the Committee. He stated that the commercial had generated 16,000 responses from the New York City area; 6,000 responses from the Westchester area; 6,000 responses from the Albany area; 6,000 responses from the Syracuse/Utica area and 7,000 responses from the Rochester area.

Mr. Ofner stated that campground reservations had increased by approximately 12%. He advised that people were expected to take shorter vacations and the decision to take those vacations would be made on short notice. He said that the goal of their advertising was to brand the Adirondacks as a vacation destination. He said that most people were unaware of where the Adirondacks were located. Mr. Connors played the 3-minute Video On Demand download for the Committee members and noted that it was also filmed in full high definition. He said that the footage in the VOD was of the entire Adirondack Park and noted that 28,600 people watched the video last summer. Mr. Ofner advised that the Adirondack Park was in excess of six million acres and was larger than the State of Vermont or the State of Massachusetts. He said that one of the goals was to educate people as to what the Adirondacks had to offer and, with that in mind, they were developing a new website, visitadirondacks.com. He added that the website would have a button for first time visitors to click on and would have a video for the consumer to view. He stated that at the end of the

video there was an opportunity for the viewer to either replay the video or view an aerial tour of the Adirondacks. He advised that on the website the viewer could click on each individual region and receive unique information pertaining to that region. He noted that there was a link that went directly to the visitlakegeorge.com website.

Mr. Ofner stated that when a consumer requested information they were sent a fulfillment package which would include the Warren County Travel Guide. He said that this year the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council would also advertise in Ontario and Quebec, Canada. He added that last year the Adirondack region had the most Canadian visitors since 1996. He stated that this year for the months of January and February visitation was increased by 45% as compared to last year.

Ms. Johnson questioned if they would be able to get more advertising for the same amount of money, given the current state of the economy. Mr. Ofner responded that the cost of advertising had been decreasing and he anticipated the ability to purchase additional media for the same amount of money. Mr. Taylor asked if there was a way to view the VOD on the internet and Mr. Ofner responded that the video was on the visitadirondacks.com website and could also be viewed on youtube.com. Mr. Champagne asked if any funding was received from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to assist in funding the fishing campaign and Mr. Ofner replied in the negative. Mr. Pitkin questioned what happened with the leads that were received from the advertising and Mr. Ofner responded that all leads for the Lake George region were forwarded to Ms. Johnson. Ms. Johnson stated that the leads that were received by Warren County through advertising were available to any property in the County, either electronically free of charge or through a label program.

Brief discussion ensued.

Luisa Craige-Sherman, Executive Director of the Warren County Council of Chambers, reported that their last meeting had been held at the Wells House Restaurant in Pottersville, New York. She advised that there were 40 people in attendance who represented their eight member Council. She stated that the Warren County Council of Chambers had adopted a resolution in support of retaining the buildings on the Gaslight Village Property. She added that they had also adopted a resolution to send a letter to Governor Paterson voicing their opposition to his proposal for a tax cap on State lands. She advised that the Council was working collectively to create an Upper Hudson River map, which she felt would be completed in time for the Quadricentennial Celebration.

Larry Bennett, owner of Bennett's Riding Stable, stated that he was representing small businesses in the area. He advised that this winter the weather was conducive to snowmobiling and as a result the area had seen an increase in the number of winter visitors. He said that the advertising for both the Adirondacks and the Lake George Region was working well in attracting visitors to the area. He noted that he had received a phone call from Germany from a person wishing to make a reservation for snowmobiling. He said that there had been an increase in the number of day trippers and weekend visitors this winter.

Alice Grether, Director of Tourism for the City of Glens Falls, commented that she felt strongly that advertising for the Adirondacks needed to demonstrate that there was theater, museums, restaurants and culture in the area and that it was not just about outdoor sports. She added

that women made the majority of the household decisions including decisions on where vacations were taken. She said that as a woman, the advertisements that were displayed would not have compelled her to make a trip to the Adirondacks.

Mr. Geraghty advised that the New York State High School Basketball Championships had attracted in excess of 17,000 people. He added that it was important to promote the area during such events. Mr. Kenny said that there was a coordinated spike in the Smith Travel Report during the week of the Championships. Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, advised that he had gone downtown in the City of Glens Falls on Sunday during both weekends of the Championships and had been surprised at the number of restaurants which were closed. He said that there were an additional 17,000 people in the City and it appeared that the business owners were not interested in doing business with the visitors. Ms. Grether responded that she was making an effort to make business owners understand the importance of staying open when an event, such as the Basketball Championships, was taking place. She attributed the majority of the problem to bad planning.

Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that she had 'mystery shopped' the Exit 17 Warren County Visitor Information Center on several occasions. She advised that the hours of operation were insufficient, the pictures which were displayed were in need of updating and the customer service was deplorable. She added that the Information Center was the gateway to Warren County and it did not send a good message.

Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Tessier advised that the Committee needed to enter into an executive session to discuss the employment history of a particular person.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously that executive session be declared pursuant to Section 105 (f) of the Public Officers Law.

Executive session was declared from 10:27 a.m. to 10:58 a.m.

Committee reconvened.

Pursuant to the executive session, motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously that the base salary of the Director of Tourism, Employee No. 8203, be increased from \$63,750 to \$67,695, an increase of \$3,945, with an effective date of January 1, 2009 and to forward same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Sheehan and seconded by Mrs. Simmes, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist